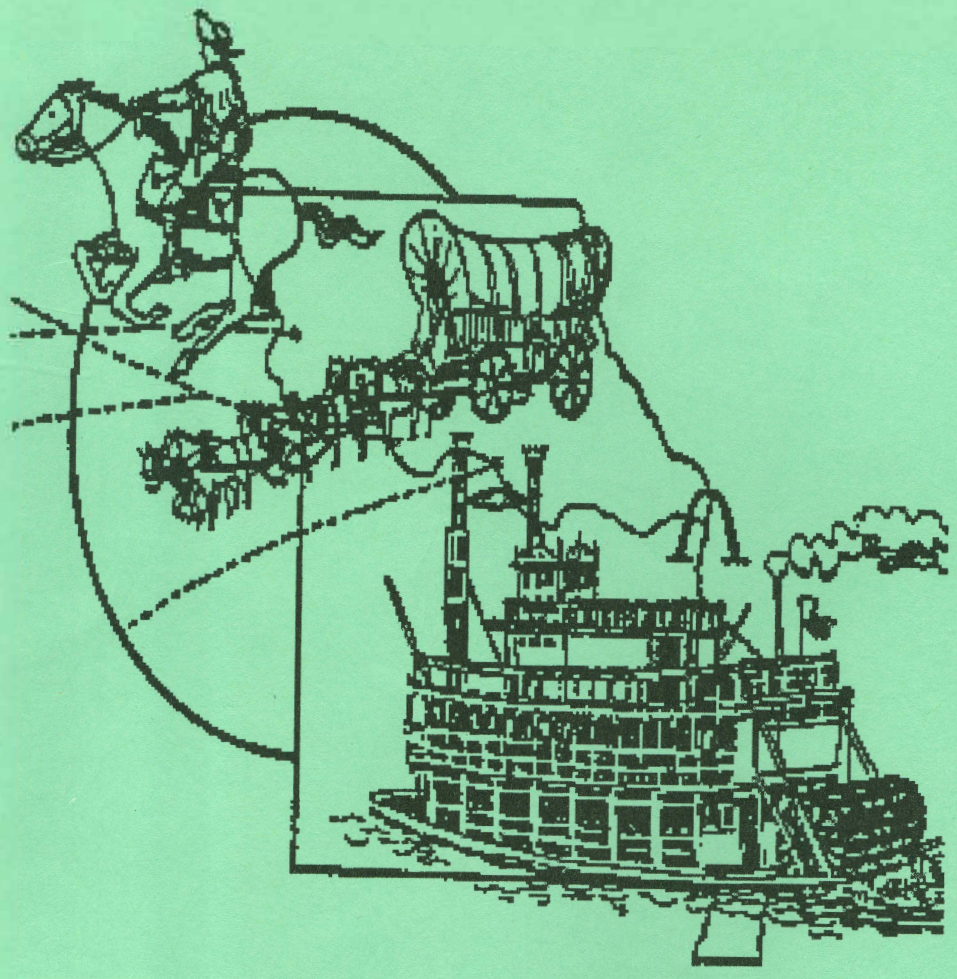

Toward The Setting Sun

2nd Series, Vol. 2, No. 2 Spring, 2004

TOWARD THE SETTING SUN

The Historical Journal of the Missouri Conference

The United Methodist Church

Second Series

Volume 2, Number 2 *Spring, 2004*

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Beyond the Setting Sun, Second Series.* The title of our journal comes from one of the great legends of Missouri Methodist history. The legend is that, when the Missouri Conference was organized in 1816, the western boundary was set at "the farthest cabin toward the setting sun." Like too many great stories, this one isn't true. A serious search of the *Discipline* and *The General Minutes* shows that the western boundary of the Missouri Conference was left undefined. Of course, it's an easy step from that to the inference of "the farthest cabin…" There is a big difference between inference and historical fact, but the story is just too good to ignore. Hence the title of our journal.

In this issue of the journal, we present three different views on our history. The first paper, by Shannon Casey, a student at St. Paul School of Theology, deals with an issue that is more about the denomination as a whole than about Missouri. However, her paper topic (written for a course in United Methodist History, taught by your editor) is so important for all of us that we requested it for *Toward the Setting Sun.* Elmer Clark's paper on Early Methodism in Missouri was first presented as the historical address to the St. Louis Conference of The Methodist Church in 1960. It was printed in the conference journal and reprinted here, because of its continuing interest and value. Clark begins by talking about Missouri and then focuses, for most of his paper, on circuit riders – a topic of great interest to us, as well. Clark was a clergy member of the St. Louis Conference, and became the General Secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History of The Methodist Church. He was the general editor of Asbury's *Journal and Letters.* Caren Loper's paper on singing the faith, in the light of Wesley's hymnals is also not a direct connection to Missouri, but her topic is of historic importance, and carries an important message for United Methodists in all times and places. Caren is also a student at St. Paul School of Theology, and her paper was also written for the editor's course in United Methodist History.

This year and next mark some important dates in Missouri Methodist history. They are listed under "Historical Notes of Interest," along with some words from the recent meeting of the conference Commission on Archives and History.

We always welcome your letters, suggestions, and offers to write for *Toward the Setting Sun.*

John O. Gooch, Editor

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WOMEN'S STRUGGLE FOR ORDINATION IN AMERICAN METHODISM

Shannon T. Casey

In 2006, the United Methodist Church will commemorate its 50th anniversary of ordaining women. This indeed will be a celebratory event, yet at the same time it's somewhat grievous due to the fact that it's been *only* 50 years. In 1880, two women sought ordination in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Both were declined, not because of lack of education, experience or ability to preach, but because they were women.[1] Anna Oliver and Anna Howard Shaw were both successful preachers and had witnessed to and converted many for the sake of the Kingdom.[2] Yet ordination in the Methodist Episcopal Church was not to be theirs. It took two World Wars, a Korean War, and a cultural shift in the mindset of Americans before women could be ordained. For the purpose of this paper, we will take a walk back in time and revisit the milestones that led to the ordination of women in the Methodist Church, which include the fascinating stories of Anna Oliver and Anna Howard Shaw.

Anna Oliver was a highly educated woman, even by today's standards, and had a vast array of life experiences. Before entering seminary at Boston School of Theology, she had earned a Masters Degree with honors from a New York woman's college, taught African-American children in Mississippi after the Civil War, "studied art," and worked for the temperance movement at two different times.[3] She was not your typical woman of the late 1800's! She was the first woman in America to earn the Bachelor of Divinity degree from Boston School of Theology.[4] Upon graduation in 1876, she served the Methodist Episcopal Church in New Jersey and in New York as an evangelist.[5] All that was needed for this

position was a "License to Preach." Margaret Newton Van Cott, also known as Maggie Van Cott, had paved the way by being the first woman to be "Licensed to Preach" in the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1869.[6] Yet, being an evangelist did not satisfy Anna Oliver for very long. Thus began her quest for ordination.

Oliver was supported by two congregations in her quest for ordination, Passaic, N.J. and Brooklyn, N.Y.[7] In essence, the New England Annual Conference elected her as a candidate for ordination, but the language of the *Discipline* prevented the Conference from ordaining her.[8] So the Conference appealed to the General Conference and asked for removal from the *Discipline* of all male-specific language related to ordination.[9] Oliver, herself, sent a written and very personalized appeal. Below are excerpts from her written appeal:

> The work of an evangelist is unsuited to women --- certainly to me. It is contrary to the instincts of my nature. An evangelist has no home, is tossed from place to place . . . pastoral work is adapted to women, for it is motherly work. . .as a mother spreads her table with food suited to the individual needs of her family, so the pastor feeds the flock. Each knows the sick ones, the weak ones, those that must be carried in the arms, and those strong enough to help others. I recognize this field as suited to my natural qualifications. My interest begins with conversions. Then an evangelist leaves . . . I cannot endure to preach old sermons. I have subjects in my mind that will not let me rest until I work them up. To do so would be better for my present and future usefulness, and for my own growth in grace. But a person who is preaching every night in the week, cannot prepare new subjects. The longer I preached as an evangelist, the less interest I felt . . . as a pastor my interest daily increases . . . in less than two years thirteen churches desired me for their pastor. But the ecclesiastical authorities refused to appoint a woman, *preferring in some instances to close or sell the church buildings* . . . God sanctions my pastoral work . . .I have no one under God with whom to advise but the Bishops and Brethren of our Church. Therefore I ask you, Fathers and Brethren, tell me, what would you do, were you in my place?[10]

She argues that the work of a pastor is better suited to her gifts than the work of an evangelist, even though she has been quite successful at it. She critiques the current practice of evangelism in the church --- "to warm up cold churches and *start* revivals," and then to move on to the next church, while at the same time sharing her understanding that an

evangelist is one who helps an overworked minister in his pastorate during the time of revival.[11] Yet this is not being done! And, ultimately God has affirmed her ministry as evidenced by the multiple churches who desire her leadership. Even though this appeal was very moving and fulfilled the requirements of the *Discipline*,[12] the General Conference voted down her election for ordination because she was a woman – plain and simple! In my personal opinion, the underlying issue was not necessarily one of gender, but one of power. If Oliver had been approved for ordination in 1880, she would have received voting rights as a full member of the New England Annual Conference during a time in our country's history when no other woman was allowed to vote - period! How strange to think that one has *more* power and influence by voting in the political structure of the Methodist Episcopal Church rather than when one is preaching, teaching, and converting from within the pulpit! For it was acceptable that women preach and teach to everyone and everywhere, yet not to pastor a particular community for a particular length of time. Anna Oliver wasn't alone in this quest. Anna Howard Shaw was right beside her all the way.

Anna Howard Shaw was a graduate of the Boston School of Theology, and applied for ordination the very same year as Anna Oliver.[13] Shaw didn't spend any time writing an appeal to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church because the Bishop of the New England Conference recommended that she "get out of the church."[14] She agreed to do just that in order to find a church that would ordain her. One of her classmates from seminary advised her to apply for ordination in the Methodist Protestant Church instead.[15] She wrote in her memoir about this experience:

> They were a very inferior body to the Methodist Episcopalians, and I didn't have to pass any examination or anything, for what I'd already done was so far superior to what they required. So all I had to do was send in my application and they had to interview me . . .they generally discuss the person's character afterward while he leaves the room . . . I thought they would be about ten minutes and then ask me to

> come back . . . they took two days to do it . . . they asked me a whole lot of questions. The first ones they asked were about [Saint] Paul . . . did I know what Paul said and did I believe it. And I said yes. Then they said what did I [think} about his having said, "Wives obey your husbands." So I told them . . . and they hadn't heard of that. Then I added , but even if he did mean as they said, it didn't apply to me for I had no husband to obey. But they said I might have. I said I might have but if they believe in Paul the only thing for them was to ordain me, for I might have a husband who ordered me to preach and if they would ordain me now I could, whereas if they ordained me and he ordered me not to preach I could stop if I married. Well, of course that made them terribly mad . . . I had the best of them, for they were not educated people at all.[16]

It is easy to see that Anna Howard Shaw was an expert in the art of rhetoric and debate! Even though several more obstacles were presented by the Methodist Protestant Church, Shaw persevered and was finally ordained on October 12, 1880.[17] However, her victory was short-lived. The Judiciary Committee stated that this action was "unauthorized by the law of the church," and therefore she was no longer considered an elder and full member of the church conference, thus meaning she had no voting rights.[18] Despite this ruling, the New York Conference continued to affirm her "orders and work."[19] Time would show though that the church would seek after her, asking her to preach at General Conferences --- yet she always turned them down![20] She became a much sought-after speaker on the national scene.

In 1885 Susan B. Anthony hired her to be a "salaried public-speaker" for the Woman's Suffragist Association where Shaw delivered 600–plus speeches per year, sometimes speaking more than eight times a day.[21] She traded in her pulpit for the open fields. When she was questioned by former church members about no longer preaching the Gospel of Christ, she refuted by explaining that in "advocating the enfranchisement of women, the temperance movement and other reforms, she was teaching applied Christianity."[22] Her oratory skill and anecdotal style drew crowds, and she became the Women's Suffragist movement's most popular speaker. In 1915 *while our country was at*

war, she orated her most popular speech, "The Fundamental Principles of a Republic," to areas such as New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, at the amazing age of seventy![23] In 1919 President Woodrow Wilson signed an amendment to the U.S. Constitution enabling all women to vote, and it was "ratified and became law in 1920."[24] Unfortunately, Shaw didn't live to see that reality come to pass; she passed away on July 2, 1919 in her home.[25] However, without her deep commitment to the Social Gospel, the mindset of our country would never had changed in its understanding of women's rights for the first-half of the 20th century.

As stated earlier, both Anna Oliver and Anna Howard Shaw had the support of their congregations while seeking ordination. Mary Griffith, who was a board member of the General Organization on Women's Home Missionary Society, appealed in 1880 to the General Conference on behalf of all women --- lay and ordained.[26] Her main argument was that women should be allowed as delegates to the General Conference and in leadership roles within the church, such as "trustees, stewards, Sunday-School superintendents, class-leaders, exhorters, and preachers – itinerant and local. . ."[27] She begins her argument with "Our Church is composed of men *and women* . . . [this] truth is constantly ignored."[28] She ends her argument with the support of Scripture:

> The Church is supposed to be founded upon *spiritual* principles. Measured by a spiritual standard, women are the equals of men. In Christ's kingdom is neither bond nor free, male nor female. Does his Church on earth fairly represent that kingdom when its constitution ignores women, and its customs shut her out of its highest places of privilege?

By 1890 the MEC had expanded the roles of women to include that of stewards, class-leaders, and Sunday School superintendents, and granted them admission to the General Conference as lay delegates.[29] Yet ordination was still not a possibility. James

Buckley, Church Editor, opposed the admission of women and wrote a letter defending the General Conference in 1890.[30] In it he gives reasons such as no one else would do a woman's work if she herself didn't do it, women aren't suited to withstand heated debates, and that women would "weaken what has been the stronger arm of the Church's moral power."[31] It is interesting to note that Buckley's speech begins with the issue of gender, and ends with the issue of power:

> All objections to the admission of women into the General Conference come at last to this --- that they are *women* and not men . . .those who do not know how to use that [moral] power, *or are not content with it,* can add only an *imitation* masculine element to the General Conference, which will misrepresent rather than represent God's true woman.[32]

It took sixty-six more years before women won this particular debate in the Methodist Church! The United Brethren Church was ahead of the game. Ella Niswonger, a graduate of Union Biblical Seminary (now United Theological Seminary) in Dayton, Ohio was the first woman to be ordained in their denomination on September 11, 1889.[33] In the following decade, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church ordained Julia A. Foote as a deacon in 1896, and Mary J. Small as an elder in 1898. [34] What is most interesting about the A.M.E. Zion Church is that they had removed "male" language from their *Discipline* back in **1868**! Therefore, the door had been opened long before a woman came knocking on it. In contrast, the Methodist Episcopal Church South was way behind the game. Belle Harris Bennett appealed to the General Conference for the *lay* rights of women *in the next century* --- in **1910!**[35]

After the victory of obtaining full voting rights in our nation in 1920, the women of the MEC renewed their effort for advocating women's rights for ordination. Kansas lay delegate Madeline Southard appealed to the General Conference of 1920 arguing that women

who worked in mission fields overseas as evangelists were not allowed to receive these new converts into the church or administer the sacraments to them.[36] Male ministers were limited in number. Sometimes one was located fifty to a hundred miles away, and had to be sent for in order for these new converts to be received.[37] Southard made a plea based on the social reality of ministry overseas.

In 1924 a new voice was heard throughout the General Conference . . . the voice of Georgia Harkness. She received her education at Cornell and Boston Universities, earning a Ph.D. in 1923.[38] She went on to teach religion at Elmira College for Women (1923-27), Mt. Holyoke College (1937-39), Garrett Biblical Institute (1939-1950) and Pacific School of Religion (1950-74).[39] She critiques not only the mindset of the clergy, but also the laity! She states in a letter the following:

> There is, however, a deep seated relic of medievalism in the attitude of the Church at large which the clergy has not done all it might to eradicate . . . when men are permitted to preach whose education does not extend beyond the eighth grade, and women college trained and sometimes theologically trained are denied the privilege, something is wrong.[40]

She goes on to give a count-by-count argument addressing the current objections of the General Conference, which range from scriptural support for women to "keep silent in the churches," to the Church losing its "public esteem" if women were to enter into ordained ministry.[41] Her letter was very eloquent and thorough, but as history would show, it did not immediately persuade the minds of the men at General Conference. Years later in 1939, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the MEC, South and the Methodist Protestant Church all merged to form the Methodist Church.[42] Interestingly, there was a close vote during the Uniting Conference on granting full clergy rights to women . . . they could be trained and be ordained, but just not become "members of a conference," which restricted their voting rights.[43] Progress was made, but the final goal had yet to be attained.

The United States of America officially entered into World War II in December of 1941. The war did not end for the U.S. until 1945. During this war, women went to work in order to support their families and to support the war effort like they had never done before. Women took on blue-collar jobs and went to work in ammunition factories, steel mills, on farms and over 200,000 women joined the military.[44] America was realizing that women could perform in these roles and do it well. Many credit this shift in roles as being the single greatest cause for women's liberation. Ads such as "Rosie the Riveter" were commonplace!

America stayed out of war only a few years, and entered into the Korean Conflict in the early 1950's. There were two missionaries in Korea at this time, one of whom became the first woman to be granted full clergy rights and Conference membership in the Methodist Church. Maud Jensen, an ordained elder, and her missionary husband, Rev. A. Kristian Jensen worked in Korea during the time of the conflict. Her husband was captured by the Communists and lived in prison from 1950-53.[45] Once released, they both resumed their missionary work in Korea in 1954, and she became an instructor at the Methodist Theological Seminary.[46] In May 1956, the General Conference granted full clergy rights and Conference membership to Rev. Maud Jensen, yet she was not present at the General Conference! She had remained in Korea, and she learned of this transaction by reading it in the local military paper, *The Starts and Stripes*![47] She notes that, "This was interesting, and also seemed a bit humorous to us --- to learn through the military. But the *meaning* was never funny, but deeply appreciated."[48] In this written interview she pays homage to Dr. Georgia Harkness and all the other women for their strong leadership in attaining this outcome.

> It took seventy-five long years for this dream to become a reality. What have I learned from this? I have learned that those who seek equal rights have to raise their voices and fight even though the battle may not be won within their own lifetime. Your effort paves the way for those to follow.

> Unfortunately history has shown that those who hold the majority of power rarely share their privilege out of generosity. Therefore, those who are seeking a voice and want to be represented must look within themselves to speak out on inequality, racial, social, and even power issues. Looking at different cultures and contexts, this can be seen: civil rights for African Americans during the 1960's; liberation theology for the Hispanic culture in South America in the last half of the twentieth century; and womanist and feminist theologies for women all around the globe in the late twentieth century.

As a woman from the South, I have gleaned much valuable insight for my own future in ordained ministry. Finding my own voice has been quite a journey here at Saint Paul, and I'm growing slowly in my comfort level with the authority that a clergy robe affords a person. Yet, this authority is two-sided: authority within the congregation and authority within the community of the Annual Conference – our ordained peers. I have found it more difficult to speak up within a group of my peers such as in a staff meeting to address issues or conflicts that deal with the staff itself. It's easier to do this with a group of youth!! I think the most important thing is to know one's own growing edges and how you can work on them.

As I write this paper, I have approximately one and one-half years before I complete my seminary education at Saint Paul. As I prepare in my mind for ordained ministry in the Louisiana Annual Conference, I do so with hesitation and some concern. An undisclosed elder in the Louisiana Annual Conference confided that Louisiana still has a long way to go in terms of promoting the acceptance of true gender equality in the order of elder. I believe that this mindset is not only the clergy's but also the laity's. I had it myself before I moved up here to Kansas City!! After being in the United Methodist Church for 24 years, I had only personally known two women who were ordained --- one was a deacon, and the other an elder both in my home church in Baton Rouge. As I look around Saint Paul and the Kansas

East Conference, and the Missouri Conference, I notice that women are everywhere! But being in ministry and having authority in ministry are sometimes seen as two different things, especially when it comes to being a woman. I suppose for me it boils down to the issue of power in leadership . . . learning how to use it appropriately, effectively, and not abusively.

As I prepare for my future, I remember my Call . . . God has asked me to follow God's plan for my life and to do so in such a way that sets me apart from the priesthood of all believers. I embrace this Call, yet I do so with an excited heart and trembling hands knowing that I can never trust in my own efforts to succeed but in God's grace. Even though I may find my voice, and raise it, there is no guarantee that I will accomplish the end result that I seek. Yet, I know if God has called me to this task, God will see it unto completion in God's own time.

Editor's Note: The first woman ordained and admitted into full connection in Missouri was Myrtle Saylor Speer, who was admitted on trial on June 5, 1956, and in full connection in 1958. The 1956 General Conference had permitted the ordination of women for the first time.

Endnotes

[1] Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism,* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), 352.
[2] The General Commission on Archives and History, The United Methodist Church, "Anna Oliver" and "Anna Howard Shaw," internet website, accessed on 9/24/03 and 12/04/03, available at http://www.gcah.org/Methodist_Bio/Anna_Oliver.htm and http://www.gcah.org/women_ministry2.html.
[3] The General Commission on Archives and History, The United Methodist Church, "Anna Oliver."
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[5] Ibid.
[6] The General Commission on Archives and History, The United Methodist Church, "Margaret Newton Van Cott," internet website, accessed on 12/4/03, available at http://www.gcah.org/women_ministry.html.
[7] Anna Oliver, "Test Case" on the Ordination of Women, (New York: Wm. W. Jennings, 1880), 1-8. Excerpts as noted in "Anna Oliver Seeks Permission From General Conference to be Ordained," *The Methodist Experience in America: A Sourcebook, Volume II,* eds. Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 392.
[8] Norwood, 352.
[9] Ibid.

[10] Anna Oliver, 391.
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[12] *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2000,* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2000), 182.
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[26] Mary L. Griffith, "The Position of Women in the Methodist Episcopal Church: A Statement and Appeal to the General Conference," *Daily Christian Advocate* (Methodist Episcopal Church) 9/21 (25 May 1880): 88, as noted in "Mary Griffith Appeals to General Conference Delegates on the 'Position of Women in the MEC,' *The Methodist Experience in America: A Sourcebook Vol. II,* 395.
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[28] Ibid. 395.
[29] "An Open Letter to Methodist Women, " *Christian Advocate* (New York_ 65/25 (19 June 1890): 392, as noted in "Woman's Caucus Crusades For/Church Editor Buckley Crusades Against The Admission of Women to General Conference," *The Methodist Experience in American: A Sourcebook, Vol. II,* 435.
[30] James M. Buckley, "Because They Are Women," *Christian Advocate* (New York) 65/41 (9 October 1890): 659:60. Excerpts, as noted in "Woman's Caucus Crusades For/Church Editor Buckley Crusades Against The Admission of Women to General Conference," *The Methodist Experience in America: A Sourcebook, 436.*
[31] Ibid, 437.
[32] Ibid, 436-7.
[33] The General Commission on Archives and History, The United Methodist Church, "Ella Niswonger."
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[35] Methodist Episcopal Church, South, *Daily Christian Advocate* 16/15 (20 May 1910): 117-18, as noted in "Belle Harris Bennett Advocates Lay Rights for Women in MECS" *The Methodist Experience in America: A Sourcebook, Vol. II, 473.*

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[37] Ibid, 503.

[38] The General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church, "Georgia Harkness," internet website, accessed on 12/04/03, available at www.gbgm-umc.org/harkness/georgia_harkness.htm.

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[42] Frederick E. Maser, "The Story of Unification," *The History of American Methodism, Vol. III,* 470.

[43] Ibid.

[44] C.L. Sulzberger, *The American Heritage History of World War II,* (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co. Inc., 1966) 453, 471-2.

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[47] Maud Keister Jensen. United Methodist Women's Oral History Project. Interviewer: Naomi Kooker. Transcriber: Karen Heetderks Strong. Finished transcript with editions by Maud Keister Jensen and Carolyn De Swarte Gifford. Women's History Project. General Commission on Archives and History, The United Methodist Church. Madison, N.J. 1984, as noted in "Maud Keister Jensen Remembers Honor of Being First Woman Granted Full Clergy Rights," *The Methodist Experience in America: A Sourcebook, Vol. II, 592.*

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EARLY METHODISM IN MISSOURI

Elmer T. Clark

The Saint Louis Conference is rich in Methodist History. At New Madrid is the oldest operating church west of the Mississippi River, dating from 1810. Old McKendree Chapel, near Jackson and Cape Girardeau, was erected in 1819 and is the oldest Methodist building west of the Father of Waters.

This is therefore the Sesquicentennial year of the New Madrid Church. In 1810, Jesse Walker crossed the Big Swamp from Cape Girardeau, accompanied by a farm boy named John Scripps,[1] and preached in what has been called the capital of the Louisiana Purchase. They found no Methodists in that French Roman Catholic area so far as is known, but they formed a class and three years later New Madrid appeared in the minutes as an appointment in the Illinois District of the Tennessee Conference, with Jesse Walker as Presiding Elder and William Hart as preacher in charge.

I was stationed as a boy preacher in New Madrid during its centennial year. About ninety-nine years previously had occurred the New Madrid earthquake, one of the worst in history, the marks of which were still apparent; this disturbance was felt by Bishop Asbury at Columbia, South Carolina, and he made an entry about it in his famous Journal. During my tenure also occurred the great flood, which submerged the parsonage and covered practically the whole county; when the county was wet ten feet deep we had a local option election and voted it dry for the first time in its long history. There was in existence at that time a quarterly conference journal from the year 1820 and from this I prepared a centennial history of the church. I have been informed that this valuable historical document has disappeared.

Old McKendree Chapel, of course, is well known. It was erected when John Scripps was serving the Cape Girardeau Circuit, and though it was a log house with only one room it was called the largest and finest meeting house in the western country. There in September, 1819, Bishop Enoch George held the first conference in the Missouri territory and Bishop Roberts held conferences therein 1821, 1826, and 1831. This historic site is now a shrine of Missouri Methodism, amply protected and preserved for future generations.

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[1] Editor's note: John Scripps was later the secretary of the Missouri Conference

Actually, Methodism in Missouri is more than one hundred and fifty years old. It is well known that as far back as 1798 a local preacher named John Clark stood on a rock in the river near the present town of Herculaneum and preached to people assembled on the shore. This was illegal, for the law required that each settler must be "un bon Catholique," but the commandant was willing to overlook Clark's violation provided that he did not put up or ring a bell, call his house a church, baptize anybody, and remained a good Catholic. Of course, the commandant knew that Clark was a Protestant.

So Clark ventured across the river and began to round up the Protestant settlers. He seems to have formed a class at Coldwater in the present Saint Louis county. The commandant knew all about this and occasionally ordered the preacher out of the territory, which order was obeyed for a few days at a time.[2]

Clark later became a Baptist. He died at Coldwater in 1833 and was buried there. Many years ago, I visited his grave and photographed the weather-beaten old stone marker.

The Missouri Circuit appeared in the minutes of 1807. In September of 1806 Bishop Asbury held the Western Conference at Ebenezer meeting house in Green County, Tennessee. This conference had no western boundary: it included everything west of the river and Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio on the east. Asbury appointed John Travis to the Missouri Circuit in the Cumberland District; William McKendree was the presiding elder and his district included Nashville and middle Tennessee as well as the whole of Missouri and Illinois. It is said that Travis inquired about the location of his circuit and was informed that it was bounded on the east by the Mississippi River and on the west by the setting sun.

In October, 1808, Asbury and the newly-elected Bishop McKendree held the Western conference in the home of Major Green Hill near Nashville, Tennessee. This was McKendree's home conference and the first one at which he presided. Green Hill, the host, was a notable man. In his home near Louisburg, North Carolina, in 1785 Asbury and Coke held the first conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, then only ten weeks old. Five conferences were held in Hill homes in North Carolina and Tennessee. In 1808 Samuel

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[2] For another view of the John Clark legend, see *From Circuit Riders to Crusades,* by John Gooch, and "More Thoughts on John Clark," in *Toward the Setting Sun,* 2nd Series, Volume 1, No. 1, Fall, 2002

Parker was appointed Presiding Elder of the Indiana district, Abraham Amos was sent to the Missouri Circuit, Joseph Oglesby to Meramack, and John Crane went to Coldwater.

On September 30, 1809, Asbury and McKendree held the conference at Cincinatti and Jesse Walker was sent to Cape Girardeau, an event which led to the formation of the New Madrid society. The Indiana district had six circuits covering three states, including Missouri, which was not a state and would not be for a dozen years. There were three circuits in the territory.

Up to this time Methodism had not been established in Saint Louis. John Scripps visited the place for a few hours in 1815, and he preached there several times when he was in Coldwater circuit in 1817. But no society was formed.

Jess Walker formed the first class in Saint Louis early in 1821. The dramatic story is well known, though it is of doubtful authenticity. It is said that he visited the settlement in 1820 but found no lodging place and was so discouraged by indifference and insults that he determined to proceed to Mississippi. When he was eighteen miles out of Saint Louis, however, he became ashamed of his cowardice and rode back. He secured a two-room log house near the courthouse which he used as a residence and a preaching place. Progress was difficult and slow, but on or about the first Sunday in 1821 he succeeded in organizing a class of about six members, to which twelve others were soon added. Among these early Methodists were Mrs. O'Fallon, the parents of T.M. Finney, and the mother-in-law of Samuel Cupples, names destined to become famous in Saint Louis Methodist history.

The church was now established from Saint Louis to New Madrid. There was now a Missouri Conference. The districts were the Indiana, Illinois, Arkansas, Missouri, and Cape Girardeau. There were fourteen circuits with 1,976 white and 245 colored members.

It will be unnecessary to follow further the developing history of Methodism in Missouri. Let us turn to the men who founded it and the nature of their work. The names that should be mentioned include Jesse Walker, John Scripps, John Travis, Samuel Parker, Joseph Oglesby, Thomas Wright, John McFarland, Benjamin Edge, Samuel H. Thompson, Rucker Tanner, and Washington Orr.

These men were circuit riders. It was a long time before there were any "station churches" in Missouri or anywhere else. The circuit rider, of course, is famed in American

history, but his story has never been adequately told and his spirit has never been fully appreciated. I would like to point out some elements of that spirit.

1. They were primarily evangelists. In the language of the day they had "an eye single to the salvation of souls" and all other duties were secondary. It was written down in their *Discipline,* "you have nothing to do but save souls. You are not to preach so many times, or to take care of this or that society, but to save as many souls as you can."

We cannot imagine a modern bishop sending the preachers to their appointments under those instructions! But the circuit riders had to preach when and where they could, and they had to create their societies before they could take care of them. And so they rode the frontier stalking souls as a hunter stalks his prey.

Their exploits need no retelling. They preached in brush arbors and in the open air, in cabin homes and in tap rooms, on ferries, and sometimes in jail. In search of souls they went everywhere. When the rain poured down, men said, "Nothing is abroad today except ducks and Methodists." It was said that the first human sound heard in the wilderness was the ring of the pioneer's axe as he cleared out a space for his log cabin, and the second was the "hello" of the circuit rider who rode up to the cabin door.

They were undaunted by distances, dangers, or indifference. When a street preacher was driven out of New Orleans a ruffian gloated "That's the last we'll see of him," but a bystander replied, "Oh, no! That man's a Methodist and they always go back!"

2. One secret of the circuit rider's power lay in the fact that he spoke the definite and concrete language of the people. He knew what he meant, and his hearers knew what he meant. The art of double talking, of using words which mean one thing in the dictionary and to the hearer, but to which the preacher attaches a different meaning, was unknown to the circuit rider. When he said "soul," "sin," "lost," "saved," "heaven," "hell," he knew exactly what he meant, and his congregation knew. If a penitent asked, "What shall I do to be saved?" the circuit rider had an instant reply, and in concrete and definite terms. This definiteness and sense of certainty was a source of the circuit rider's power, just as it explains the small sect's power over the plain people today.

Another secret of his power was the nature of his message. His theology was simple but it concerned the things the people desired most to know. He had no doctrines the others did not have, but he believed in the reality of the supernatural and the spiritual. The circuit

riders taught that all men are sinners; that Christ died for all; that all can be saved by repentance, faith, and moral living; that human hearts can be cleansed of the roots of sin; that men who are saved may know they are saved.

Their theology dealt not with observances, but with life. Not what men do, but what men are, was the main consideration. It was a gospel of personal experience, and it was powerful in their hands because they were products of it. They themselves had all experienced the salvation they preached, and out of that experience they sang:

"What our hearts have seen and felt
With confidence we tell,
And publish to the sons of men
The signs infallible."

3. The most striking characteristic of the circuit riders was their spirit of self-abnegation, their utter disregard of themselves, their physical welfare and normal desires. Not elsewhere, except among the early Christians, can be found such a story of total devotion to a cause on the part of so many men, and such total indifference to personal considerations.

There was no stove in Lovely Lane Chapel at Baltimore when the preachers met there at Christmas time in 1784 to organize the Church. There were no backs to the benches. Yet no mention was made of the cold (though it was recorded that someone put up a stove before the conference adjourned) as these men made the rules that were to govern themselves and their work. And what rules they were!

For example, they set their own salaries. They were all the same: $64 and no more! There were to be no marriage, funeral, or baptismal fees, or if any were insisted upon they must be applied to the $64 salary or turned in at the conference for the benefit of those who had not been paid in full.

The rules they made for themselves were stringent. They ordered themselves to rise early and work unceasingly. "Never be unemployed, never be triflingly employed." "Converse sparingly and cautiously with women, particularly with young women." "Do not affect the gentleman." "Be ashamed of nothing but sin; not of fetching wood or drawing water; not of cleaning your own shoes, or your neighbor's." The men who made such rules for themselves were not motivated by consideration of physical comfort. They gloried in their poverty, and they rode across the country singing

No foot of land do I possess,
No cabin in the wilderness.

The early circuit riders could have no homes, no wives, no children, no sweethearts. Men so encumbered could not freely ride the frontier, and the preacher who married customarily left the traveling connection. It is said that Asbury once complained, "the devil and the women are getting all my preachers."

These men set up a regimen that even they could not endure. "How did they ever stand it?" has been asked. And the answer was, "They didn't stand it! They died."

Five hundred of the first 650 preachers were compelled to locate. Of the first 737 who died, 203 were under 35 years of age, and 121 were under 45. "Nearly half died before they were thirty years old. Of 672 of those first preachers whose records we have in full, two-thirds died before they had been able to render twelve years of service! Just one less than 200 died with the first five years!" If that was not martyrdom, what name should be applied to such giving of life for the service of God?

4. Under the rules they made for themselves at the Christmas Conference they were to do more than save souls, in the sense of securing conversions. They were "to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord!" To bring them to repentance and then to build them up in holiness – they were as careful of the one as of the other.

They were extremely careful with the children. It is difficult to understand the source of the opinion that the early circuit riders knew and cared nothing about child guidance. Each preacher who has ever been admitted to a Methodist Conference since 1784 has been required to answer affirmatively to the question, "Will you diligently instruct the children in every place?" The records are crammed with stories of the relations of the circuit rider with the children. "Put on my new apron, Mother," said one little girl, "for Bishop Asbury is coming, and I know he will hug me up."

They had few Sunday Schools. Quarterlies and curriculum materials were unknown to them. The child psychology they knew was not read in books. But their methods were none the less profoundly based and wonderfully successful. "Go into every house in course," they ordered themselves, "and teach everyone therein, young and old, if they belong to us, to be Christians inwardly and outwardly. Make every particular plain to their understanding; fit

it in their memory; write it upon their heart. In order to do this, there must be line upon line, precept upon precept. What patience, what love, what knowledge is requisite for this?" Furthermore: "Where there are then children whose parents are in society, meet them at least an hour every week. Talk with them every time you see one of them at home. Pray in earnest for them. Diligently instruct and vehemently exhort all parents at their own houses."

Regularly the circuit riders were to preach on education, thus early laying the foundation for the remarkable Methodist appreciation of learning. There was not much opportunity for education along the frontier. None of the early circuit riders were highly trained in the schools, and some drew back from preaching on the subject. But the rule was stern: "But I have no gift for this." "Gift or no gift, you are to do it."

What modern religious educator has developed a better method of building converts up in holiness? Or secured results comparable to those achieved by the early Fathers of the church?

5. The early Methodists insisted on a strict morality. It was definitely designed to separate the Methodists from the unregenerate world and to make of them a distinct people, to break them off from their old associates and environment, and to surround them with a new group, whose approval would support their new way of life.

Naturally, the Methodists opposed drunkenness, profanity, gambling, lying, adultery, dishonesty, and the flagrant frontier sins which even the ungodly could not defend. Their morality embraced Puritan elements also. They looked askance at theatres and parties, novel reading and dancing, and some of them frowned on lodges and tobacco. They even went so far as to place bans on "gold and costly apparel" and to prescribe plain dress and black bonnets. "you could know a Methodist preachers by his plain dress as far as you could see him," said Peter Cartwright. "The members were also plain, very plain, in dress. They wore no jewelry, no superfluous ornament or extravagant dress of any kind, and this was the rule by which we walked, whether rich or poor, young or old."

At the Christmas Conference one of the questions was "Should we insist on the rules concerning dress?" The well-known answer was, "By all means. This is not time to give any encouragement to superfluity of apparel. Therefore give no tickets to any, till they have left off superfluous ornaments. Allow no exempt case, not even of a married woman. Give no ticket to any that wear high heads, enormous bonnets, ruffles, or rings."

One preacher wrote as late as 1854: "My soul is deeply pained, O Lord; what will become of they Church? Several of our members wear ear-rings. Some of them wear finger-rings. Lord pity them!"

When a woman came to a love feast in Kentucky wearing a fur muff, James Axley was uncertain, but he finally said, "God in, sister, catskins and all!" But when two appeared with low necks he gave them handkerchiefs to cover their bosoms. And Joseph Mitchell once said to a gaudily dressed lady, "young woman, one flash of hell fire would burn off all those furbelows."

Well-placed Methodists of this affluent generation commonly smile at these old-fashioned restrictions, but if many of us observed them today we would probably be better men and women. The early Methodists were nearly all poor people, and could ill afford to waste their money on trifles. The preachers wanted their converts to be different from the worldlings around them. They were striving for brotherhood, and to prevent class distinctions based on wealth.

They knew and acted upon what we know but ignore, namely, that pride and self-indulgence and aping the world are the deadliest foes of religion, which make rifts in the Church and damn many a Methodist. And who shall say there were not right?

This was the evangelistic spirit of early Methodism. As we look back, there is something awe-inspiring about it. In complete self-abandonment our fathers in the Gospel pushed into every nook and cranny of the advancing frontier, seeking the souls of men to convert them and "build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord." Asbury was the leader who showed them the way. He rode 257,000 miles and preached 16,000 times, averaging a sermon a day for fifty years. He held 224 conferences. When he came there were a half dozen preachers; when he finished his ministry there were 700, and he had ordained 4,000 with his own hands. In the beginning there were only a thousand Methodists here; when his career was ended there were 214,000. He came out of England to superintend a few straggling offshoots of an English revival, and his self-denying genius created on these shores the first Methodist Church, which far out-stripped its British mother. Then Asbury lay down to die by the side of the road, in another man's house, trying in his last delirium to take up a missionary collection.

That is our heritage. We cannot reproduce its details, but we can be true to its spirit.

It is said that the backed-up waters of the TVA were advancing to engulf the one-room log cabin of a Tennessee mountaineer. The engineer built a nice stone house on the hill and told the mountaineer it was his without cost.

But the man refused to leave his cabin, and the engineer discovered that his reluctance had to do with the fire upon the hearth.

"My grandpa built that fire a hundred years ago," the man explained, "and he never let it go out. For he had no matches, and it was a long trip to the nearest neighbors to borrow fire. When grandpa died, my pa tended it, and when he died, I tended it, and none of us ever let it go out. I'm not goin' to move away and leave the fire which my grandpa built."

Then the engineers brought a great iron kettle and gathered up the coals in the man's fireplace, carried them up to the new house, and poured them out upon the hearth, and kindled them up again. And the faithful mountaineer moved out of his log cabin in the valley into the stone house on the hill – but he took along the fire of his fathers!

We Methodists have moved into a new world that the circuit riders never knew. We have problems they never met, demanding methods they did not use. We cannot duplicate their program, nor would it enable us to survive in this complex age. But if we could move into our new environment and carry along their spirit – their singleness of purpose in the search for souls, their total denial of personal comfort in their search, and their unending effort to build men up in holiness – then the record of our achievement would be worthy of comparison with theirs.

KEEPING THE FAITH THROUGH SONG

Caren Loper

The intention of this paper is to begin the process of exploring, in depth, hymns of the Methodist/United Methodist church historically, and how their usage has shaped our faith. My thesis is, keeping the faith strong through song. It is my position that John and Charles Wesley recognized early on, the significance of hymn singing not only for instruction of scripture, psalms, evangelism and theological doctrine, but also as a means of unifying the diversities of humanity. It is also my argument that we, as people called Methodists, have a need to reclaim our rich heritage of congregational singing. In doing so, it is my hope that the United Methodist denomination will rise to a glorious renewal of bringing God's Kingdom on earth.

Hymnal resources, used in this discourse, date back to a Facsimile Reprint of a "Collection of Psalms and Hymns, 1739," commonly sung at the Foundery in London and continue progressively to the current United Methodist Hymnal of 1989. Time and space allowed for this particular research paper do not allow for that broad of range. Therefore, I will work with the hymnal resources from 1739, 1770, and 1779. These three resources have John Wesley's statements of vision and instruction for use. While the organizational structure of the hymnals is in itself quite interesting, I have found much information in the prefaces of each hymnal that affirm my opening thesis and clarify the significance of hymns to our faith denomination. This will be my main area of focus for this particular essay.

I begin with the 1739 *Collection of Psalms and Hymns*. The preface of this book was by Rev. G. Osborn. He states that this book of hymns and psalms were published in order to improve worship.[1] Further, he says John Wesley led the way in worship invocations.[2]

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[1] John Wesley, *Collection of Psalms and Hymns*, Preface by Rev. G. Osborn. D.D., printed by Lewis Timothy, 1739, *Collection of Tunes, Set to Music, as they are commonly sung at the Foundery!,* printed by A. Person and Fold by T. Harris, at the Looking-Glass and Bible on London- Bride; T. Rye, at Gray's Inn-Gate, Holborn, and at the Foundery, near Upper-Moorfields, MDCCXLII.

Osborn outlines in the preface three divisions of the Hymn and Psalm Book.[3] First is the section of Psalms, and Hymns for Sunday, Wednesday, and Saturday general worship.[4] Wednesday and Friday were focused on confession and humility.[5] For Saturday worship, the emphasis was placed on praise to God as the creator of the universe.[6] Osborn says, "After their day of Pentecost had come,' at Whisundtide, 1738, the habit of singing was revived."[7] This revival of singing spurred more requests for hymnals. Because John Wesley had such compassion and desire for the poor to find ways to improve themselves, he set about providing collections of hymns containing more than forty texts and tunes for sixpence.[8] John Wesley was adamant that "neither ignorance nor poverty should stand in the way of improvement."[9] I understand through these words of G. Osborn that, very early in his ministry, John Wesley saw hymns as instruments for the poor to use in self-improvement. Wesley was proactive, by his inclusiveness of all people, for social justice. Wesley understood that if the people were relating to what they were singing, and requesting more printed hymnals to have in their personal keeping, then the hymns were meeting a need.

The need, as I understand it, would have come from the excitement over congregational singing. Congregational singing was actually very innovative as a direct contrast to the sacred music of the Catholic, Lutheran, and Anglican Churches. All of the established church denominations were a higher church liturgy with trained choirs. To put this in better perspective, I am speaking of a historical time where sacred music was dominated by Bach, Handel, and sacred choral works. The high liturgical style of these denominations did not encourage congregation singing. Isaac Watts and the Wesleys

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[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

directed their music ministry to hymnody that encouraged congregational singing. While this becomes quickly another research project, I think it is important to note the historical context surrounding the early rising of Methodism. The need, as I see it, was people's eagerness to participate in worship through singing. The Wesleys made that possible with their prolific poetry set to familiar tunes. Both were highly skilled at writing texts that addressed their doctrines and theology. John Wesley was sensitive to the need, and seized the opportunity to supply hymnals for the masses. His motivation was for people to improve themselves through the doctrine and theology of the singing of hymn texts, thus rising out of poverty. Poverty, not only in the material sense, but likewise in the spiritual sense.

A Fetter Lane Tune is printed In the back of the Collection of Psalms and Hymns, Vol. 1, p. 77.[10] The tune is easily sung and the text resonates of God's love and grace.

O Throw away thy Rod, O Throw away thy Wrath,
My gracious Sav'our, and my God, O take the gentle Path.[11]

These hymn texts and tunes would have been accumulatively written and developing during the years that include the first and second rise of Methodism. They follow on the heels of the Moravian influence of songs that strengthened John Wesley's faith. John carried with him experience of singing with the Moravians, and that had a significant impact on the rise of Methodism. While John Wesley left the Fetter Lane Society, it is important to connect his early years of ministry as setting the foundations of his theology of prevenient grace and God's love, and combining that with hymn singing. Likewise, we see the importance of singing the hymns and psalms with the common people who were seeking answers to their faith questions for their lives. In reflection let us set all of this in the context of other events leading up to and surrounding this time. The church had moved through the reformation period, where the reverberation of Luther's wrath of God is still resounding in people's ears. There are those that were influenced by Calvin's predestination. John Wesley's previous

[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

quotation from the Fetter Lane song, is stating his opposition to a wrathful God and salvation through election. Rather, Wesley's God is one that is a God of grace and a more gentle loving way. We hear Wesley's urgency for converting as many as possible to an understanding of love for God and love for neighbor. This is important as we move forward to a later *Hymns and Spiritual Songs.*

John Wesley's words, in his preface to *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, clearly state his purpose of inclusiveness and unity for all people. Wesley's subtitle says the hymnal is: "Intended for the Use of Real Christians of all Denominations".[12] Wesley's preface is based on the following scripture:

> Ye have put off the old [person] with [their] deeds, and have put on the new [person], which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of [God] that created [Christ]: where there is neither Greek or Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free; but Christ is all and in all. Col. iii.9-11.[13]

Before looking at the stated purposes, it is important to know a bit of background information. The 1770 *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* by John Wesley pre-dated the first authorized Methodist Episcopal Hymnal by fourteen years.[14] The date for this hymnal is significant to what was happening in the development of Methodism. It was in 1770 that John Wesley published a new edition of the "Large" Minutes. The "Large Minutes" set into place the doctrinal and disciplinary guidelines, basic agenda and the thirteen questions still asked each year in conference. Just as the Methodist Church had grown to maturity so, too, the hymnal had evolved into the highly organized 1770 *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* publication.

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid. I have changed the gender language to be inclusive, and for clarity of understanding.

[14] W.H. Meredith, from John Wesley, M.A. Late Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Intended for the Use of Real Christians of all Denominations,* Bristol, England, Printed by William Pine, 1770.

John Wesley lists four purposes of the 1770 Hymnal as follows. First, Wesley says, "The innumerable mischiefs which have arisen from bigotry, an immoderate attachment to particular opinions or modes of worship, have been observed in all ages, by [people] of a calm and lowing spirit. O when will it be banished from the face of the earth! When will all who sincerely fear God, employ their zeal, not upon ceremonies and notions, but upon justice, mercy, and love of God!?"[15] If there is to be comfort in knowing that the human condition has for centuries been weak spirited, argumentive and bigoted in our approach to worship styles, it is here. These words speak loudly and clearly to me in relationship to what seems a present day schism in churches of all denominations concerning blended, traditional, contemporary, ethnic and global music, and how those are used or not used in worship.

Could it be that it is this musical schism that promotes the schism between the more conservative line in United Methodism and the more liberal members of our denomination today? I believe it is at the heart of it. When it is difficult for people to sing their faith together, because one thinks it should be "contemporary praise songs," while another relates to the "traditional hymns," and still others feel marginalized from failure to sing global and ethnic hymns, how can we possibly begin to be in conversation about our diversity? My argument is that if we as a denomination can sing one another's music, we can better understand, and not only understand, but appreciate one another's theological viewpoints as having the common goal of a just, merciful and loving God that John Wesley speaks of. In letting go of energy spent on insignificant rhetoric, we could better use our energy focused on justice, mercy, and the love of God.

Second, John Wesley continues to expound on the issue of unity. He says, "The ease and happiness that attend the unspeakable advantages that flows from a truly catholick[16] spirit, a spirit of universal love, (which is the reverse of bigotry) one would imagine, might

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[15] John Wesley, M.A. Late Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Intended for the Use of Real Christians of all Denominations,* Bristol, England, Printed by William Pine, 1770.

[16] I am using catholick as the spelling used by Wesley in his writing.

recommend this amiable temper to every person of cool reflection."[17] It seems clear here that Wesley is saying, there is so much joy in unity, universality that it should be shared with all people. So, we hear the importance of hymns for evangelism that reaches out to all people, in order that they might also benefit and find joy in this universal love and unity of spirit. We hear this especially in the Wesley's statement that follows, "And, who that has tasted of [their] happiness can refrain from wishing it to all [humanity]?" [18] Further he says, "Who that has experienced the real comfort, the solid satisfaction, of an heart enlarged in love toward all [people] and in a peculiar manner to all that love God and the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, can avoid earnestly desiring, that all [people] may be partakers of the same comfort?"[19] I understand Wesley to say, why in the world would a person who has experienced comfort and happiness of knowing unity of spirit, justice, mercy and love of God, want to keep it to themselves? It is better he says, to share with all of humanity, so everyone, without bias or prejudice, might do likewise. One of the ways we accomplish that goal of unified spirit is through singing the hymns.

Wesley's third proposal is that evangelism through singing the hymns is bringing people to God. In detail he says,

> It is with unspeakable joy, that these observe the spirit of bigotry greatly declining, (at least in every protestant nation of Europe), and the spirit of love proportionally increasing. [People] of every opinion and denomination now begin to bear with each other. They seem weary of tearing each other to pieces on account of small and unessential differences: and rather desire to build up each other, in the great point wherein they all agree, the faith which worketh by love, and produces in them the mind with was in Christ Jesus.[20]

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[17] Wesley, *Hymns*.

[18] Ibid. I have replaced Wesley's language of "his" to [their] and "mankind" to [humanity] for inclusive language and clarity in today's historical context.

[19] Ibid. Here, I have replaced Wesley's language of "men" to [people] as I interpret his use of men to include all people.

[20] Ibid.

I find it interesting that Wesley qualifies his opening statement into the context of "at least in every protestant nation of Europe." It seems to contradict his following statement in which he says, "every opinion and denomination" are becoming more unified with one another. He does express optimism at the progress hymn singing has with a positive influence for people in relationship to one another. This affirmation he speaks of, is credited to the love of Jesus as the Christ in their hearts and minds.

Finally, Wesley states his vision for the hymnal of 1770. He says,

> It is hoped the ensuing collection of hymns may in some measure contribute, through the blessing of God, to advance this glorious end, to promote this spirit of free love, not confined to any opinion or party. There is not an hymn, not one verse inserted here, but what relates to the common salvation; and what every serious and unprejudiced Christian, of whatever denomination may join in. It is true, none but these who either already experience the kingdom of God within them, or at least earnestly desire so to do, will either relish or understand them. But all these may find herein either such prayers, as speak the language of their soul when they are in heaviness; or such thanksgiving as express in a low degree, what they feel, when rejoicing with joy unspeakable. Come then all ye children of the Most High, and let us with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.[21]

I hear, in Wesley's voice, great enthusiasm for inclusiveness and unity of singing. The main focus is on God, and God's blessing of unified spirit regardless of denomination or opinion. His hope is, even if it is in small measure, that the collection of hymns will bring blessings of unity surrounding salvation for all people. Likewise, his desire is that all who sing the texts might sing with understanding and joy. Wesley is anticipating that people might turn to the hymns in the form of prayers to comfort their burdens. This resonates with pastoral care of self through hymn singing. He also hopes that people will find hymns that express in humbleness their great thankfulness and rejoicing of the Ultimate Being. His closing statement beacons all children of God to join in a unified voice, and mind, their praise that glorifies God. We as the people called United Methodists might do well this day, in our

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[21] Ibid.

historical context, to revisit the above purposes for hymn singing based on Wesley's selected scripture of Colossians 3:9-11. In doing so, perhaps we could reconnect with Wesley's visions for hymn singing as a means for unity of spirit. Next, we look at the 1779 hymnal by Wesley.

A Collection of Hymns, 1779, was for the use of the people called Methodists by the Rev. John Wesley, M.A. This particular collection of hymns was created by Wesley to meet the needs of the people. Those needs revolved around the need for a large collection, with variety, yet small, and inexpensive. ("Cheap" as John pens at one point of the preface.) Music and hymn singing was such an integrated part of the worship experience that to have such a large volume of text, in such a convenient book, at an affordable price, was a necessity. The necessity was again to be as inclusive as possible, enabling evangelism to as many people as possible for conversion. Again, if we were to analyze the context of the need of the people, we see a period of Methodism surrounded by tensions and transitional movements. It is my interpretation that the need for this hymnal was one of maintaining some stability of the Methodist movement through song.

The preface has eight areas that John Wesley addresses. I will not discuss all eight, as the first two are spoken of in the previous paragraph. There are a couple of things I would like to reference in significance to Wesley's theology. The Wesleys were consistent in stating their theology in the texts. In item number five of the preface, he refers to perfecting holiness.[22] He says that the texts are pure and strong, simple yet elegant, and to the point.[23] Aside from his theology the sixth statement of the preface reads, "to those who are judges thereof, with all freedom and unreserved- John says, "In these hymns there is no doggerel, no botches, nothing put in to patch the rhyme; no feeble expletives, nothing turgid or bombast,

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[22] Rev. John Wesley, *A Collection of Hymns*, Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, London; Published by J. Mason, at the Wesleyan Conference Office, 14, City Road; and Sold at 66, Paternoster-Row, 1779.

[23] Ibid.

on one hand, or low and creeping on the other."[24] He is specific about the care that has been taken in writing, editing and compiling all of the texts of this book. Wesley seems to challenge his critics or anyone else, who may think they might find any errors in this hymnal. Later in number seven, Wesley requests that people make use of and reprint the hymns, but is adamant that if they are reprinted, that it be done so without any adaptations or changes.[25] The only condition for changes would be if the person doing so were to note the changes to the side or at the bottom of the page.[26] This request was made as he was very clear that he and Charles wanted no responsibility for "others nonsense or doggerel."[27] Number eight speaks to Wesley's theology of salvation saying, "When poetry thus keeps its place, as the handmaid of piety, it shall attain, not a poor perishable wreath, but a crown that fadeth not away."[28] Therefore, we hear John speaking with passion about the words he and his brother have penned for singing. We hear repeated theological points in concern for perfection of holiness and piety. In the last statement of number eight, Wesley is so passionate about his writings that he suggests, as I interpret it, that poetry's place as the servant of piety, assists people in gaining their salvation and eternal life. ("the crown that fadeth not away).[29]

How does all this apply to United Methodists in the twenty-first century? My hope is that through the historical revisiting of Wesley's prefaces of the earliest hymnals, pastors, music ministers, and lay congregations might reclaim the significance of hymn singing in relation to love of God and neighbor, and ultimately our salvation! This is not to say we must sing only Wesleyan texts. What I am arguing for is that in examining all of the previous material, collected from primary resources of Wesley's, dated, 1739, 1770, and 1779, we begin to see how hymn singing was used in Wesley's Holiness and Methodist

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[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

movements. Further, there is a parallel to present day needs. A revival of congregational singing is imperative, if we are to revitalize to the glory days of "Singing Methodists".

What are our needs as a church in the twenty-first century? Donald Messer suggests six ways for effective faithful ministry, through "reminding", interpreting", "protesting", "advocacy", "envisioning", and "reconciliation".[30] I understand Messer to be addressing pulpit pastors in this context. A parallel I envision, is the ability for a strong music ministry to aid in these areas of need in collaboration with pastors. We have available hymns that address all of the above issues in our current 1989 *United Methodist Hymnal, The Faith We Sing* and *The Global Praise Book.* There are hymns that remind us of who and whose we are. Secondly, we have hymns that focus on social justice issues, as well as hymns that interpret psalms and scriptural text. Finally, many of the hymn texts in *The Faith We Sing* are inclusive and vision reconciliation, justice, peace and God's Kingdom on earth. In singing the Global Praise music with authentic instrumentation settings, our congregations have a window from which to see their brothers and sisters in Christ. Music has the potential to plant seeds for higher values for society to live by. Small groups are excellent settings to introduce unfamiliar tunes and texts. All this is to say, by comparing and contrasting the needs of the 21st century with the needs of Wesley's historical context, many similarities can be seen. Wesley is a great model for how we go about integrating hymn singing to its fullest potential.

We see, in reflection, that nine years into John Wesley's ministry, he experienced a need for more hymnal availability for congregational members and those seeking conversion. The Wesleys were intentional about promoting, first, improvement in worship through the congregational singing of hymns. A need for new texts arose out of a desire to have people learn through singing, the Wesley's doctrines, and theology. John Wesley was on the cutting

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[30] Donald E. Messer, forward by Emilio Castro, *Contemporary Images of Christian Ministry,* Nashville, Tennessee, Abingdon Press, 1989, 186-189.

edge of his approach of using hymn singing to promote perfection of holiness, confession, humility and praise of God. Likewise hymn singing brought with it social justice for the poor, as he made large volumes of texts available at an affordable cost. This gave the poor a vehicle for self-improvement from ignorance, and material as well as spiritual poverty. Wesley saw hymn singing as enrichment of spiritual formation in small groups. Further, hymn singing was a pure and elegant means for instruction in doctrine, theology, scripture, and psalm singing. Above all, John Wesley is ahead of his time in areas of inclusiveness, unity of spirit, evangelism, and salvation.

In closing, the history of our United Methodist roots is very important. But, if through all this research of early years in Methodist history, we do not look at how it relates to our present and future congregations, it has little value. The hymns of faith have shaped early Methodists with doctrine and theology of John Wesley. Wesley's own words speak of his passion for the hymn texts and singing. We know Wesley's spirit of singing was deeply influenced by the Moravians. The Methodist Faith matured during the period of history in which the *1770 Hymns and Spiritual Songs* was published. In addition, during transition and tension, faith of the Methodist denomination remained strong through song. Ample personal pocket hymnals of the 1779, *A Collection of Hymns*, were published to aid in that transition. There is no doubt that John and Charles Wesley recognized early on, the significance of hymn singing not only for instruction of scripture, psalms, evangelism, pastoral care, and theological doctrine, but also as a unifying technique. We, as people called United Methodists, have a need to reclaim this part of our rich heritage called congregational singing. In doing so, it is hoped that the United Methodist Denomination will rise to a glorious renewal of bringing God's Kingdom on earth.

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HISTORICAL NOTES OF INTEREST

Important Anniversary Dates in Missouri Methodist History

2004	Sesquicentennial of Central Methodist College (The Fall, 2004, issue of *Toward the Setting Sun* will be a special theme issue on the history of Central Methodist College.
2005	50th anniversary of the ordination of women in The Methodist Church, and their reception into full membership in the conference.
	Bicentennial of Joseph Oglesby's exploration of Methodist prospects in Missouri
2006	Bicentennial of the appointment of John Travis to the first circuit in Missouri Bicentennial of the return of the Lewis and Clark expedition.
2007	Bicentennial of the first camp meeting in Missouri, led by John Travis, James Gunn, and William McKendree. This was probably also the site of the first Methodist communion service in Missouri.
2008	Bicentennial of William McKendree's first visits to Missouri as a Methodist bishop
2011	Bicentennial of the New Madrid earthquake
2016	Bicentennial of the formation of the Missouri Conference

The Commission on Archives and History

The Commission recently met at Central Methodist College. In addition to routine business, tentative plans were developed for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of women in The Methodist Church, and the bicentennial of Joseph Oglesby's exploration of Methodist prospects in Missouri. Definite proposals will be presented and acted on at the fall meeting of the Commission.

Bishop Asbury and the New Madrid Earthquake

Elmer Clark, in his article earlier in this journal, mentioned the New Madrid earthquake, and that Bishop Asbury had recorded it in his journal. Out of curiosity, I checked it out in Asbury's *Journal,* and found the following entry:

> Monday, 25th (of November, 1811) We had a serious shock of an earthquake this morning – a sad presage of future sorrows, perhaps. Lord, make us ready!

Note that, when he wrote this entry, Asbury was in South Carolina, somewhere near Columbia. Like many of his contemporaries in the church, Asbury seems to have felt the New Madrid earthquake was a precursor to the end times. Certainly, the earthquake sparked a revival in the Mississippi Valley. In the previous entry, Asbury bemoans the fact that Nicholas Snethen was chosen as chaplain to Congress; "so we begin to partake of *the honour that cometh from man:* now is our time of danger." Asbury's indignation over Snethen becoming the chaplain to Congress may have been because he feared this was another sign of the end times. The footnote to the entry of November 25th says:

> This was the New Madrid earthquake of 1811 – 1812 was one of the greatest known earthquakes of history, and it was this shock which Boehm said was felt in Columbia and not the one on the date mentioned by Asbury. Around New Madrid, Missouri, it made the most extensive known change of topography opening up Reelfoot Lake in Kentucky, changing the course of the Mississippi River, and sank an area of a million square miles, and the effects are visible today. (Both citations are from Elmer T. Clark, editor, *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury,* Volume II, pages 687 – 688.)

The Boehm mentioned in the footnote was Henry Boehm, son of the Martin Boehm who was one of the founders of The United Brethren in Christ. Henry Boehm frequently traveled with Asbury and assisted him in his ministry.

On a related note, the only time we could find that Asbury mentioned Missouri by name in his *Journal* was in connection with the meeting of the Western Conference in 1815, when he laid out a plan for making 5 conferences in the west. One of the five proposed was Missouri. Apparently in his proposal to the conference, he also outlined boundaries for the five conferences. In fact, Missouri did become a separate annual conference in 1816.